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SUBJECT: LISBON TREATY RE-RUN SET FOR OCTOBER 2

REF: DUBLIN 236 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Ireland will hold a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty on Friday, October 2. There is a general consensus in Irish political circles that the leaders of the nation dropped the ball during the first referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, which was defeated in June 2008. The 'Yes' campaigners will be anxious not to make the same mistakes again. End summary.

¶2. (U) On July 8, Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Brian Cowen confirmed that Ireland will hold a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty on Friday, October 2. The vote is required following the rejection of the Treaty by the electorate in June 2008. The Irish government believes the Treaty will pass in October, having secured a series of legal guarantees on issues of concern to the electorate such as neutrality, taxation, and ethics. The necessary legislation (28th Amendment of the Constitution (Treaty of Lisbon) Bill 2009) will pass through parliament on June 9, prior to the parliament's summer recess.

¶3. (U) In response to the announcement, Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheal Martin said that the Treaty is in Ireland's best interest, stating: "The government believes that this treaty is good for Ireland and good for Europe." Fine Gael, the largest opposition party (which supports the Treaty) welcomed the announcement, saying they would campaign strenuously for a 'Yes' vote in the national interest. The Employers Organization and the Irish Business and Employers Confederation (IBEC) also support the Treaty. Following the announcement of October's poll, IBEC's European Affairs Director Brendan Butler said "A positive result is vital to ensure that Ireland remains a constructive partner in Europe and is an essential building block on the road to economic recovery."

¶4. (SBU) Sinn Fein remained the only political party in Ireland opposed to the Treaty. Its European spokesperson, Aengus O Snodaigh, publicly criticized the Taoiseach for holding a second referendum. Declan Ganley and his Libertas party, which bankrolled the 'No' campaign in 2008, was notably silent, reinforcing the belief that Libertas will not be a factor in the second referendum following Ganley's humiliating defeat in the European Parliament elections in June 2009.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: There is a general consensus in Irish political circles that the leaders of the nation dropped the ball during the first referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, which was defeated in June 2008. The 2008 'Yes' campaign started too late, was not able to adequately explain the complex Treaty document, and allowed the 'No' side to control the agenda (Refs). They will be anxious not to make the same mistakes again.

FAUCHER